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OLD KENTUCKY RHYMES

BY

M. BETTIE BELL





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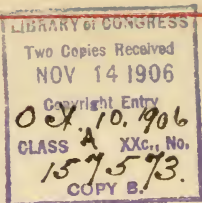
OLD KENTUCKY RHYMES

A COLLECTION OF
EARLY POEMS AND SKETCHES

BY
M. BETTIE BELL



J. E. FELLERS AND COMPANY
CHICAGO
1906



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BY
M. BETTIE BELL



Dedication

To my husband and daughters for whose peace
and happiness my prayerful thought finds
its way to God each day, and whose
love and confidence mean so
much to me, this little book
is dedicated by

The Author



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Preface

Before my mother passed away she often requested me to publish the poems I wrote when a girl. Other relatives and friends in more recent years have urged me to publish them. With some reluctance I am yielding to their wishes but with confidence that those who know what my daily life and work mean at this time, will readily see that my thoughts have risen to a higher hope and a clearer understanding than my earlier writings indicated. I shall feel amply repaid for the risk in setting this little volume adrift, if but one person finds something in the poems that renews a hope or makes an otherwise long day seem short.

A few of the poems contained in this book were written in recent years. For the most part, however, they express my earlier thoughts. If, therefore, some careful reader should feel inclined to criticise them, I am sure he will first consider the time in life when they were written.

M. BETTIE BELL.

4037 Drexel Boulevard
Chicago, Ill.
November, 1906

Christmas, 1905

THE merry bells do chime with joy
This Christmas time,
Their notes of peace without alloy
In jolly rhyme.

They sound like music in the ear,
So soft and clear,
And chase away full many a fear,
From faces dear.

Now welcome they! These bonny bells,
Of yearly chime,
A great and glorious story tells,
In every clime.

Of one who came from Heaven to earth
To give a gem
To nations, kindreds, and all tongues—
The real Realm.

The real Christmas is not told
In fiction's way;
But love and joy it does unfold
In bright array.

His gifts are not in mortal things;
These things of air,
They fade and die; but what He brings
Are treasures rare.

He was God's "Christmas Gift" to man,
His own dear Son,
He bids us see him everywhere;
You are that one.

When this we do, we are free-born;
In God's own way
We enter bliss; no more forlorn
We never stray

Then let us grasp this gift of Life,
 Make it our own;
And turn forever from the strife
 Where woe is known.

The real gem that Love has given
 Will ever shine,
And show us what and where is Heaven;
 All there, is thine.

Do not reject this holy gift;
 It is too rare,
It turns the heavy heart of stone
 To Him so fair.

He says in pleading tones so sweet,
 “Come unto Me”
And I will give you wine and wheat,
 And make you free.

“Come unto Me” and you will find
The light of day;
And in this light you’ll see to walk
In Wisdom’s way.

Not cold the Way, nor hard, nor bleak,
But always love;
It is the Way by which all reach
Our house above.

O! take the lamp by Wisdom given
With eager hand;
For by its shining we find Heaven;
We seek this land.

Let us so watch and work and pray,
That next year’s end
Shall find us knowing Christ’s Christmas
Where pride and folly bend.

These jeweled thoughts I give to you
This Christmas eve,
May on your heart the living Truth
Its impress leave.



Spring

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN

BLEAK winter is fading fast,
The cold winds have almost passed,
And gentle Spring with form so fair,
Is coming with her beauties rare.

Sweet Spring! We shall ever hail
Thy presence with delight;
For thy coming doth impart
A vision green and bright.

Thou comest with thy radiant smile,
Bringing gladness to our heart;
How sweetly we the hours beguile,
Oh, beauties, ne'er depart.

Thou bringest with thee little birds,
That chant their sweetest song,
In low and plaintive requiem
Their tuneful notes prolong.

The flowers too, with fragrance sweet,
Is wafted through the air,
And all around is pure and bright,
Decked in its Spring attire.

The glistening of the dew-drop
At the early dawn of day,
Seems to inspire with holy thought
While in mystery they lay.

It casts a shadow from our heart,
As we think with great delight
Of this unfathomed mystery
That comes with form so bright.

Oh, Spring, Thou art so pure and true
Thy clothing is sublime,
Thou tellest of our great Creator
Of Him who is Divine.

To Nelly

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF TWELVE

WHEN they told me thou wast dead,
The winds went howling by, [Nelly,
Oh, how my poor heart throbbed, Nelly,
To think you had to die.
But I know you are happy now, Nelly,
With angels by your side,
And your death I'll try to forget, Nelly,
And dry the flowing tide.

Oh, the happy hours we've spent, Nelly,
Dwell in my memory yet;
But I'm forced to be content, Nelly,
And repress my fond regret;
Oh, not for all the world, Nelly,
Would I call you back again,
Though it is a bitter struggle, Nelly,
So lonely to remain.

I never knew how dear thou wast, Nelly,
'Till I was left alone,
Then I thought my heart would break,
[Nelly,
To think that thou hadst't flown;
Oh, we never more shall meet, Nelly,
In this sad world of pain,
But there with happy angels, Nelly,
I trust we'll meet again.



Queen of May

MAY 1864

OH, glad May Day
With sunshine bright,
With flowers fair
And hearts so light;
Oh frolicksome girls,
Why choose ye me
To serve this day
For Queen of May?

You gave six maids
Of beauty rare,
You chose each one
With tender care;
With loyal hearts
They serve each day,
With loving wish
Your Queen of May.

I love these maids
You give me here,
They join with me
In this great cheer;
They will with me
In humble way,
Thank you in name
Of Queen of May.

You wreathe us all
With clover white,
And dress us in
Sweet robes so light;
You sing us songs
With poets lay,
In which you claim
Your Queen of May.

This honor great
Has come from you,
In choosing us
You were so true;
May blessings rare
Be yours this day,
This Prayer is from
Your Queen of May.



To My Mother

WRITTEN AT THE AGE OF THIRTEEN

I AM thinking of thee, Mother,
Now whilst I am all alone,
Thinking of the happy smile
That'll greet me when I come home.

Yes, dear Mother, thoughts of thee,
Pleasantly flit across my brain,
Thoughts more sweet than I can tell,
Yet, I would not them refrain.

I knew not how I loved thee, Mother.
'Till absence my love did test,
Nor did I know how I would miss
Thy loving fond caress.

'Tis said that absence conquers love
Though I've not found it so,
For every hour that passeth by
The tie doth stronger grow.

This world would be a blank, Mother,
If 'twere not for thy sweet face,
To cheer us on through weal and woe,
Our trials to erase.

Ever ready thou art, Mother,
To give some kindly word,
To those in gladness or distress
And lead their thoughts to God.



My Father

JUNE 1865

I LOVED him so
I never knew how much,
'Till at school one day
A letter came
With his dear name,
Filled with tender touch.

The tears fell fast,
Such grateful tears,
His lovely words
Still all the fears,
Such good advice,
Will ever last
For all the years

He's a manly man,
With heart so true,
And nobly grand,
A Christian too;
So firm and strong
With righteous view.

I took a look,
His restful thoughts
Lay on my book,
In folded letter.
It spurred me on
To study better.

Who would not please
A Father dear,
Love like his inspires—
Is ever near,
Hope like his requires
A ready ear.

He came at last,
 'Twas closing day,
His face was light
 With loving ray;
I won the Prize
 His arms I lay.

Approvals sweet
 From parent pride.
Who would dare tax
 A flowing tide
Of hope like his—
 Or love so wide?

At Last

AT last, I saw the light.
It came from one who knew the way;
Who said that darkness could not stay,
And taught me what she knew was right.

At last, my hope grew strong,
I strove to lay my burden down
And seek in Truth to find the crown;
I'd waited on the Lord so long.

At last, my trust rose high,
The Word of Life came clear to me,
It said, You must and shall be free,
And God shall be forever nigh.

At last, the rod was given,
To lay the error in the dust.
Obey and pray; she said we must
From all the past of sin be riven.

At last, the light did shine,
Truth healed me of a broken heart.
It said, From grief you now must part,
The saving love of Truth is thine.

At last, the love is great,
I know that my Redeemer lives,
And with His loving kindness gives
A message which is not too late.

At last, the Christ so sweet!
To her who taught me how to pray,
In humble gratitude I lay
The healing laurels at her feet.

A Gift

1891

SILVER and gold send I to you,
A piece of pure white linen too;
Dross consumed by the gold of love,
Silver purifies, lifts us above
This mortal life.

Out of darkness into light,
Linen of righteousness all so white,
With daisies wrought in silken thread,
Emblem of that which lives, not dead,
To Truth and right.

Accept from me this Christmas tide,
The gold, silver, the linen wide;
And use them each and every day,
They are true emblems that point the
To Life and Love. [way

We lay these tokens at your feet,
They bear to you a message sweet,
Of one who loves the words you speak,
And means to live them week by week
Till the Crown is won.



Home

'TIS true we find our joys at home,
Though over land and sea we roam;
The sweetest place on earth to be
Under the home-roof-dear to me.

“Home, Sweet Home,” the Poet sings,
The rippling notes an echo rings,
“Home again” — with hopes so
bright,
And “Old Kentucky Home, good
night.”

No Poet has ever yet revealed
The depth of love that is concealed.
Each pulse of heart he does require.
Home's the Eden of man's desire.

But how could language e'er relate,
Or put in words that happy state,
The blessedness of our own hearth,
The dearest, sweetest place on earth.

When tired of travel we go home,
Or when our College days are done,
The same free feeling from all care—
We find a welcome ever there.

No fairer home—where was no dirth,
Than "Cedar Grove," place of my birth,
On rolling blue grass knoll it stood
Surrounded by rich fields of wood.

It was a charm of old Kentucky
And we were called the children lucky;
The flowers and birds were all around
And fruits in plenty did abound.

Would such a home could last forever,
With Father, Mother to leave it never;
With Brothers, Sisters, always near,
No separations e'er to fear.

An ideal home, with latch-string out,
To welcome all from every route,
The home of joy, health, and beauty,
Forget thee ne'er will be our duty.

The sweetest song t'was ever heard,
In solemn chant-pathetic word,
"My old Kentucky Home, Good night;"
To yearn for you will be our right.

To a Friend

1865

MAY the soft and golden sunlight
Glint thy pathway o'er,
Till thy days are full of brightness—
And chase all shadows from thy door.
If the clouds do chance to fall
Look to God, Let Him be ALL in ALL.

Life is full of earnest meaning,
Full of something good to do,
Minds with earnest thoughts are teeming,
Thoughts that should be great and true.
Let good thinking keep you free,
In time and in eternity.

Youth and Age

THE hopes of life stand out so bold on
this fair day;

Talent weaves strands of purest gold and
spreads her flowers

In bright array to light our way.

It is the age that's fat and fair, with silver
threads in softest hair—

But not of age, 'tis youth's donation, and
Love's salvation.

With Life's pulsation and Hope's irradi-
ation.

Oh, blessed star, thou art not far at
forty-five;

And if perchance prayer has given to
quick advance on Heaven's stair,

Where may hear strands of David's lyre:

Age in spirit is youth in truth—
Innocent lamb that brings the balm to
 heal our wounds,
And put the music into rhyme that thrills
 with love, from notes above.
To chase dark thoughts of mortal lore
 From Shiloh's shore.

'Tis youth's bright realm, this love of
 lore;
The child of God will find this ore
In Judah's Rock. It is his peace that
 gives him lease
On life's great shore, where dream of age
 is never more.
Eternity's law is never bound by age or
 time

No silver thread nor wrinkled brow,
For Heaven is now.

'Tis first the blade and then the ear, 'tis
well to hear nor be afraid,
For the full corn comes with full ear,
To chase away the print of age and show
to man,
A brighter page to youth's eternal age.
'Tis look within and not without, the
inner man knows his whereabouts—
The outer man will bend not bow to age
and woe,
Growth of Truth will rob old Time of
shadow's claim; in place of shade
Shine the beauteous shrine that love has
made.

Love on, Love on, the voice of youth
Will fill thy soul with love and truth—

Heed the stranger within thy gate;
Invite him in, ere it be too late;
His touch alone will still the pride;
And solace the fear, and open wide
The door so dear that leadeth to love,
Which gives the vim of Youth in Truth
and Truth in Youth.



Peace

COME unto me,
All ye that weary be,
And I will give you rest,
To be forever free,
And ever bless'd.

Let light be yours,
And no more darkness see,
Nor count the time or tide,
My peace will come to thee,
And love beside.

Let joy be yours,
And sadness never dim
Your real sight so clear,
Peace is found in prayer,
And rest so dear.

No sickness there,
Nor sin be ever known,
No death to make or mar
That true light that's never shorn
Of its bright star.

My peace I give to thee,
So full of love and light;
A gift so pure and free
From that dear land so bright,
For you and me.

My peace I leave with thee,
And leaving, it is here
Ne'er to be torn away;
It is forever near,
And come to stay.

Make it your own,
And down the warfare lay;
In *Love* is your release
You have the brilliant ray,
It is your peace.

So peace be still,
It calms the troubled wave,
“Acquaint thyself with God”
And know that it will save
If you will wield the rod.
Your peace He gave.

A Prayer

LET me be as Thou hast made me,
Oh, my Father, Mother, God;
Let me know Thy sweetness, meekness,
Even though Thou use the rod.

Rest me, Shepherd, with Thy bounty,
Cleanse me from all subtle sin;
Let the burdens all be nothing,
Make me strong and pure within.

Let me lean upon Thee fully,
Knowing naught but Love divine;
Let me be Thy child who dwelleth
In Thy presence so sublime.

Hear my prayer, Oh, Mother Love,
That watcheth o'er me ever,
And evil may I never see,
But be with Thee forever.

Come I to Thee, to holy be,
In pastures green to rest;
May I be meek and lowly too,
For this is my bequest.

Let me know Thee, whom to know
Is everlasting, joyous life;
Let my patience ever grow
To put away earth's endless strife.

Let Thy grace sufficient be
To bear the cross and win the crown;
Let Thy faith be mine to free
And help me lay all burdens down.

Light from Thee is ever near,
Whose rays illumine the way;
That light which makes all things clear
And leads us to Eternal day.

A Bride

ALL in white she stood,
A bride so neat,
And took the solemn vow
Upon her lips so sweet.

That made her one with him
Her heart did love,
A sacred vow was given
Heard by One above.

It was a Christian vow
An hour of light.
A Godly thought did bind
The knot so tight.

These lovers joined
In Christian peace will walk,
And in sweet unity
With God forever talk.

The rare white, fleecy dress,
So pure and fine,
Told a deep tale,
Of Love's exhaustless mine.

A righteous thought
Of grace and power, and peace,
Kept stealing in, and hope
Rose high of sweet release.

In this dear bridal hour,
A tale is told—
Of how and why and what,
A Christian may unfold.

A little child
A golden ring did bear;
An emblem sweet,
That Love is everywhere.

Six maids, clothed in pink,
Typed Love's affection;
As many groomsmen stood,
To guard and give protection.

A sister clothed in white
A maid of honor fair,
To give the bride her blessing
This child of golden hair.

The parents not far away
With patient trust,
Gave their joy to other hands
Because they knew they must.

This bridal is of God
None need have fear;
But wait for Him who knoweth best
He will soon appear.

This union is a Christian work,
Death nor time can sever;
In God they'll learn to think
And live in Him forever.



Love

LET us learn to seek and ask of Love
To give us her revealings,
Let us strive to learn to look above
Where there are no concealings;
Let us gently, humbly, seek and find
The Love that is our Mother,
And with affection pure enshrined
Give worship to no other.

Let us perceive that Love and Wisdom
Is our Father, Mother, God,
Then we shall know that we are children
Of a Christly human-hood.
Then in Elchim, our only God,
We shall find immortal peace,
When we take in hand the mighty rod
And pray daily for release.

Oh, thou eternal Love,
To thee we owe our being,
And our light, and endless gratitude,
We fail no more in seeing
That thy life's plenitude
Gives us joy increasing
From all sin releasing.

LOVE



Life

OPEN the Sepulchre!
Christ is waiting
To lead you on;
Arise in newness!
Harpstrings singing—
Death is gone.

Out from Sepulchre
Christ has come
With loving touch,
To heal and save
From lawless law
That claims so much.

No death, no, never!
You cannot claim
One child of light.
Nor can you sever
With dart or aim,
For God is might.

With rod in hand
One loving band,
We're joined together;
For out of night
We've found the light
And LIFE forever.



One Rose

THERE is one White Rose
Which speaks of purity,
Its leaves in sweet repose
Talk peace and unity.

Its fragrance so sweet,
A dainty perfume has shed;
Angel thoughts will meet,
To resurrect the dead.

Heaven's where it bloomed,
A rare and costly thing,
Like a dove it loomed
And spread its fairy wing.

Only one sweet Rose,
A gift from tender hand,
That raised its strength
To guard God's precious lamb.

Let it be done! So wills
The law that made it pure,
Affection rare instills
Which ever will endure.

What is this Rose so white?
The gratitude of Love.
It bloomed in Edons light
And bids us look above.

Let God direct the heart
To pulse His affection,
Which bids all else depart
And lean on His protection.

'Tis heaven's foretaste,
Of riches rare and white;
This Rose, a gift, elate
And riches right with might.

Light

LET not your heart be troubled,
Said the voice of Love divine;
Let it never be dismayed,
Said the Truth of joy sublime;
Think no evil day by day,
Let no shadow come thy way.
Look for the light
Of omnipresent might.

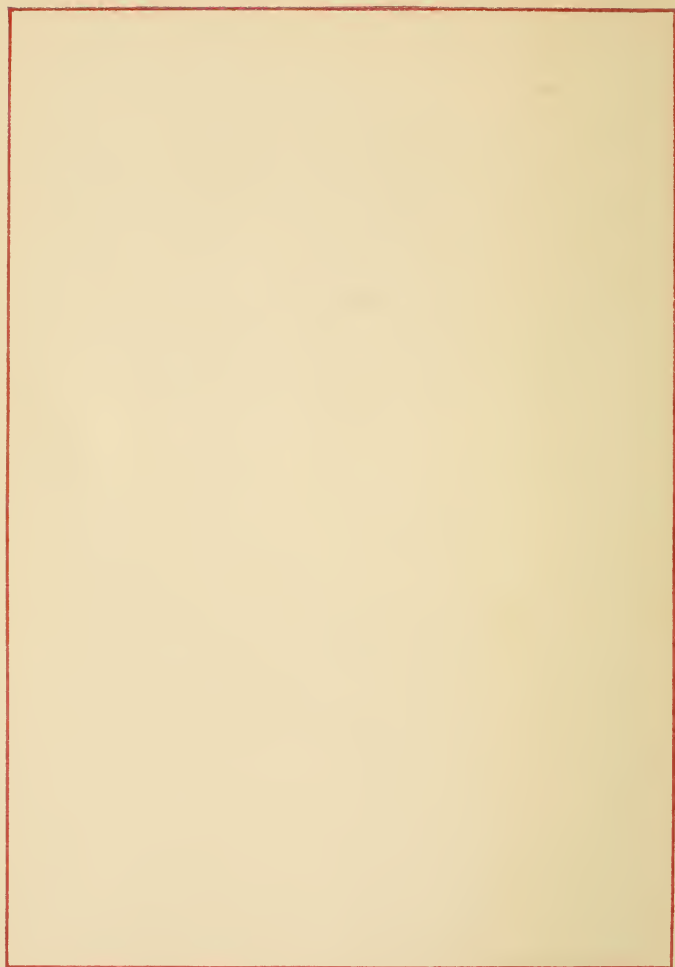
Take no thought of body, means,
Look up—not down—for heavenly things;
Earth's sere, yellow leaf shall wane,
If sin come not to thee again.
Let no erring darts of pain,
Ever prostrate you again;
Demand the right
Of omniscient might.

Let Love without dissimulation
Be to you a guiding star,
Let "Lo, I am with you alway,"
Be the light that does not mar;
Let the Love that never ends,
Be to you the best of friends.
Choose the right
And love the light.

"Let Light be"—said one who knows,
So it came to pass that way,
In that light the darkness goes,
All is light, all is day.
Let no more sin cloud thy thought,
Nor ever let thyself be caught
By errors din,
For light's within.

So heaven's NOW, it's ever near,
Always ever-present, HERE;
Let no more sleep dim thy sight,
All is everlasting Light.
Let not thy weakness ere betray
Christ, who leads you all the way
To God above
Where all is Love.





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